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The President's Daily Brief

19 May 1970

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Top Secret

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

19 May 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

A large-scale South Vietnamese cross-border operation into southern Cambodia is helping to relieve enemy pressure on two provincial capitals. *(Page 1)*

Some of the background to Peking's postponement of tomorrow's Sino-US meeting in Warsaw is given on *Page 2*.

Through the medium of a Pravda editorial yesterday, the Soviets lashed back at the Chinese for their polemical attacks on the Moscow leadership at the time of the Lenin centennial last month. *(Page 3)*

Romanian party chief Ceausescu left unexpectedly for Moscow yesterday, taking with him some of his principal associates. *(Page 4)*

The Soviets yesterday carried out a fourth test of what is thought to be a modified version of the SS-13 ICBM. *(Page 5)*

Laos is momentarily quiet, but new attacks in the south may be coming up soon. *(Page 6)*

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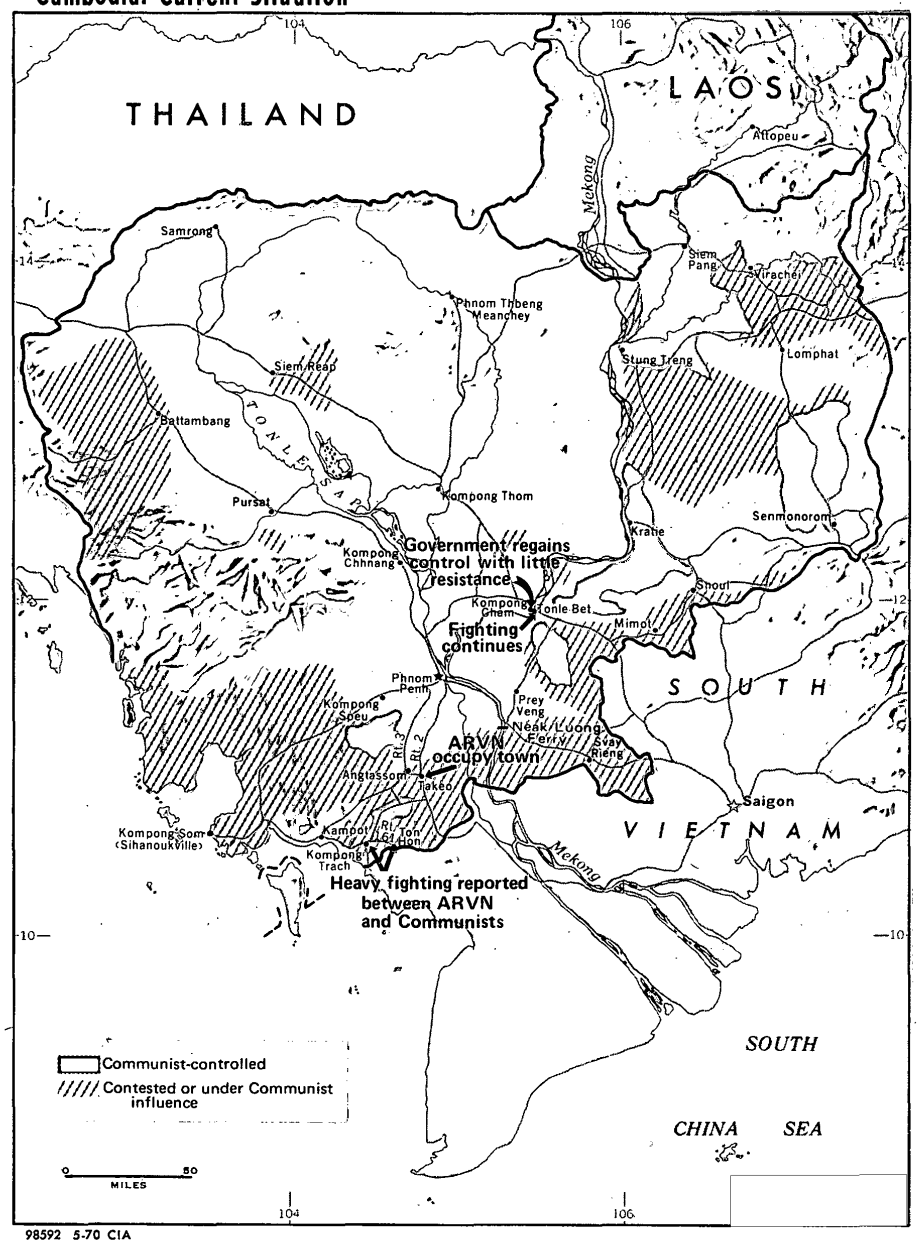
Cambodia: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

The latest South Vietnamese operation along the southern border has helped reduce Communist military pressure. South Vietnamese troops moved into the nearly deserted town of Takeo yesterday, meeting little resistance. Some of the enemy troops that have besieged Takeo for the past few weeks apparently fled north toward Phnom Penh, where they may soon encounter Cambodian Army elements headed for Takeo on Routes 2 and 3. In Kampot Province, heavy fighting was reported between South Vietnamese troops and the Communists near several towns on Route 161.

Northeast of Phnom Penh, government forces are consolidating their control over Kompong Cham city and are now fighting in the town of Tonle Bet, on the east bank of the Mekong. The Communists apparently did not put up any stiff resistance at Kompong Cham, but they may be regrouping nearby. Government losses in regaining Kompong Cham were light, and most of the casualties seem to have been caused by South Vietnamese air strikes on the city.

The morale of government security forces is still very low, in spite of recent allied military assistance. [redacted] recently that poor morale was in part a result of the near annihilation of a battalion of raw Cambodian Army recruits near the Neak Luong ferry before the ferry was recaptured by South Vietnamese troops. [redacted] the Cambodians are having trouble with the Khmer Krom mercenary troops. [redacted] they were well trained and aggressive, but [redacted] they were refusing to serve under Cambodian Army command. 50X1 50X1 50X1 50X1

The Communists are organizing Sihanouk's apparatus in "liberated areas" of Cambodia. An intercepted Viet Cong message indicates that a "conference of delegates" of Sihanouk's "National United Front of Cambodia" was held early this month in an unspecified area of Cambodia. The three leading leftist members of Sihanouk's cabinet were said to be present, as were a number of other obscure individuals who purportedly were representatives of various elements of Cambodian society. [redacted] 50X1 50X1

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COMMUNIST CHINA - US

Although the Chinese waited until the last minute to announce postponement of tomorrow's meeting in Warsaw, the move almost certainly had been under debate from the time US troops entered Cambodia.

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The final decision to postpone the talks may not have been reached until 17 May, however.

The Chinese apparently felt that to meet while US troops were engaged in ground operations in Cambodia would prove embarrassing and tend to undercut the image of militance and resolution Peking has adopted in response to developments in Indochina. In particular, the Chinese probably believe that signs they were "treating with the enemy" on a business-as-usual basis would raise questions in Hanoi at a moment when relations with the North Vietnamese were improving. It would, moreover, tend to blur the distinction the Chinese have been at pains to cultivate between their reaction to the Indochina crisis and that of Moscow, which has been equivocating on the Cambodian issue.

The Chinese are clearly prepared to resume bilateral meetings once US troops have withdrawn from Cambodia. They have said that a new date can be arranged through the normal diplomatic mechanism in Warsaw on 20 June and their public announcement of the postponement was couched in much milder language than their similar statement of February 1969. In effect the postponement is a costless "escalatory" reaction to Cambodian events, suggesting that the US cannot expect either a dialogue or an improvement of relations while Peking is under the "threat" of expanding conflict in Indochina. It nevertheless leaves the door open for renewed contacts when the current situation is relieved. Moreover, the Chinese continue to view the negotiations as an important source of much-needed political leverage in their dispute with the USSR.

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USSR - COMMUNIST CHINA

The USSR's most sweeping and authoritative condemnation of China to appear since the Sino-Soviet border talks began last fall ran as an editorial in Pravda yesterday. It is Moscow's response to the full-dress anti-Soviet blast which Peking fired off for the Lenin centennial last month and which clearly hit raw nerves in the Kremlin.

Among other things, the Pravda editorial contained:

--personal invective against the cult of Mao;

--charges ranging from Mao's irresponsible views on the inevitability of war to his forcible assimilation of national minorities in border areas;

--charges that Mao is to blame for "the latest events in Indochina";

--claims that the Chinese are trying to undermine relations between members of the Warsaw Pact.

The last cited charge, whether true or false, reflects Moscow's extreme sensitivity to any design Peking may have to intrude into the USSR's European preserve. It is a particularly sore spot just now, for the Soviets are working to create the impression of bloc solidarity against China.

The statement avoided any implication that the Sino-Soviet border dispute is heating up. It reiterated the necessity for reaching some agreement in the talks in Peking.

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ROMANIA-USSR

Party chief Ceausescu departed unexpectedly for Moscow yesterday, presumably for further argument with the Soviets over basic policy differences. The announcement of his departure at the head of a ranking delegation stated only that the Romanian and Soviet leaderships had agreed to hold "talks," suggesting that the trip was at Moscow's behest.

Judging from the composition of the group, the Romanians are prepared to discuss ideology, economics, and military affairs. According to the announcement, the delegation was seen off by most national leaders and "many Bucharest citizens." A sendoff of these dimensions indicates that Ceausescu expects to have difficult talks with the Soviets, and that he intends to give little ground.

Romanian actions in recent months have done little to improve the normally cool relations between Bucharest and Moscow.

--Earlier this year Romania tabled proposals of its own on European security and disarmament which were deliberately at cross purposes with Soviet policy.

--More recently, Bucharest followed China's lead in recognizing Sihanouk's government-in-exile rather than playing the USSR's wait-and-see game.

--Last week at the CEMA meeting in Warsaw, Romania did not join the new CEMA investment bank, presumably because the bank would tie the Romanians too closely to the Communist states and would inhibit Bucharest from expanding ties with the West.

The central issue in Moscow's view is Romania's "obstructionism" within the Warsaw Pact, including its continuing resistance to holding Warsaw Pact maneuvers on Romanian territory. Other politically touchy subjects to be discussed are Romania's good relations with both of Moscow's main antagonists, the US and Communist China.

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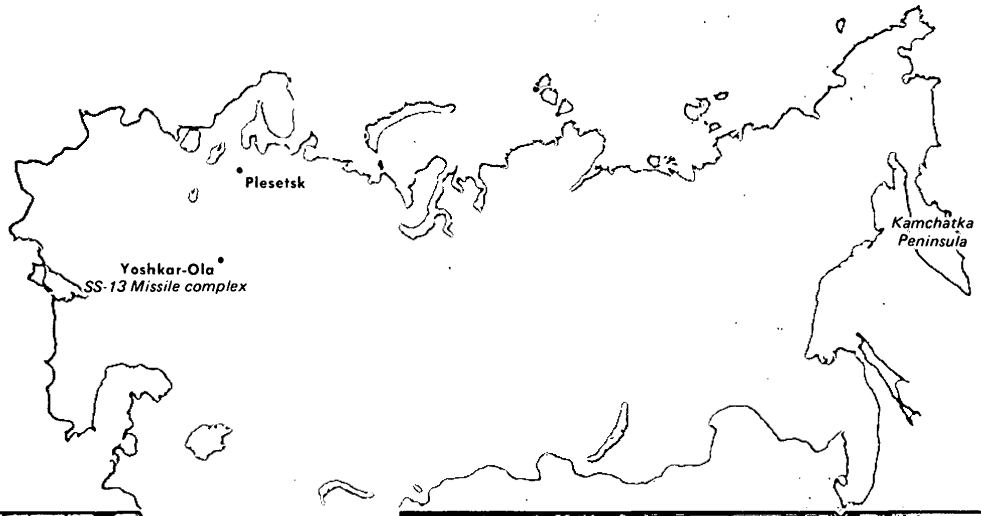
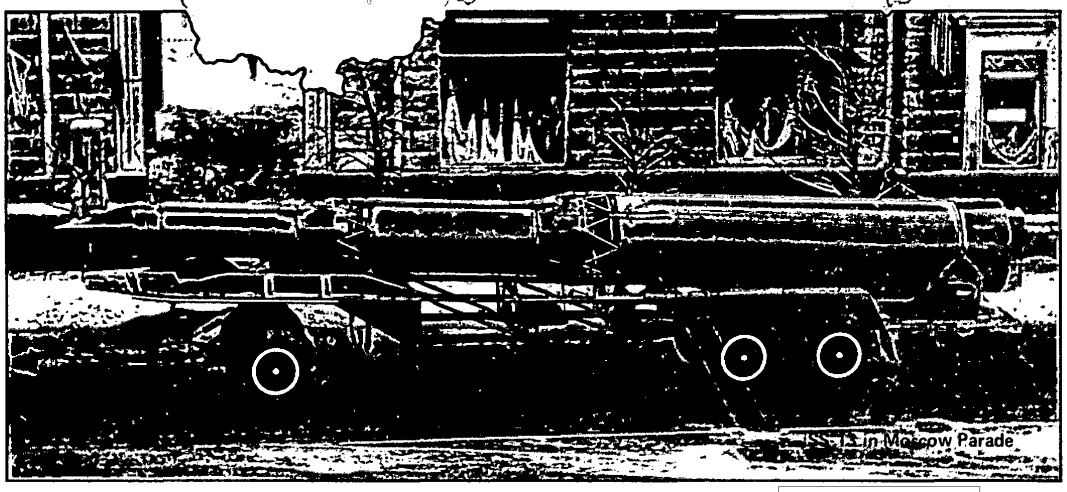
Soviets Probably Modifying SS-13





SS-13 in Moscow Parade

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USSR

The Soviets yesterday conducted the fourth flight test of what is believed to be a modified version of the SS-13 ICBM. The missile was launched from the Plesetsk test center to Kamchatka. There is not enough data yet to determine the exact nature of the modifications. They appear to include a new re-entry vehicle and possibly alterations to the launch vehicle. There is no indication of penetration aids or multiple re-entry vehicles.

The SS-13, which is akin to the US Minuteman I, is the Soviets' only solid-fuel ICBM. It has been flight tested to a range of 4,700 miles, but probably has a maximum range somewhat in excess of that. From Yoshkar-ola, the only missile complex where SS-13s are deployed, a missile with a 5,000 mile range could not reach a number of important targets in the US. Increased range, therefore, may be one of the objectives of the modification program.

Twenty SS-13s at Yoshkar-ola are operational and four additional groups of ten silos each are under construction.

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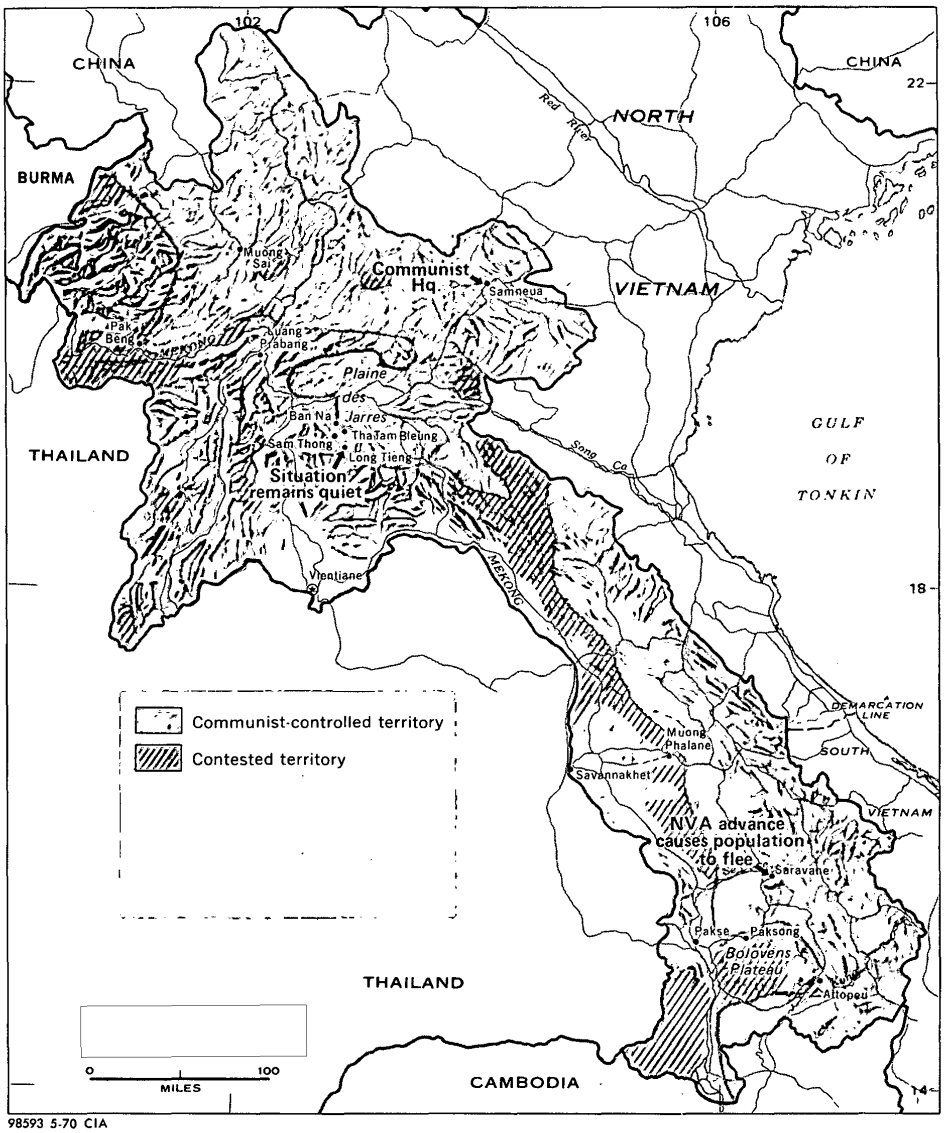
Laos: Current Situation



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NOTES

Laos: There has been no significant ground action in the south over the past few days, but an unusually brisk exchange of messages between local Pathet Lao units there and the Communists' headquarters in Samneua suggests a new round of attacks may be imminent. Lao commanders are bracing themselves for an early attack on Saravane; rumors that three North Vietnamese battalions are moving on the town has caused a general exodus of civilians to a nearby government outpost. In the north the Long Tieng area is quiet.

West Germany - East Germany: 50X1

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Bolivia: The army is putting more heat on President Ovando to remove leftists from the cabinet. This renewed pressure has already produced the resignation of Minister of Energy Quiroga, but Ovando may have to jettison others if he is to keep his own job. At last report the cabinet was still in marathon session to consider the armed forces' demands.

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